FROM: P. O. Box 9007
Berkeley, CA 94709 USA

First Class

To:

FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID 8¢
PERMIT 1083
BERKELEY, CAL.

Express Ads

YOUR AMTRAK TICKETS BY MAIL! A call is all it takes for complete planning, reservations and tickets. Call GREAT WESTERN TOURS at (415) 398-2994, or write us at the Sheraton Palace Hotel, 639 Market St., San Francisco 94105. "An AMTRAK appointed agency dedicated to the pleasure of travel by train."

A RAILFAN ORGANIZATION WHICH SHOULD APPEAL TO YOU. That's what the Twentieth Century Railroad Club is because we try to bring together the widely varied interests of railfans. THE FAST MAIL (our monthly newsletter, of interest to fans of AMTRAK particularly), activities, meetings, etc., combined with a membership of unique and interesting people make the TCRC a growing, living organization. Why not find out by writing for more information to: 10700 S. Seeley Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60643.

RAILROAD TIMETABLE COLLECTIONS BOUGHT!! LARGE AND SMALL, ANY AGE, TRY ME FIRST. Tom Coval, 21 E. Robin Road, Holland, Pennsylvania. Telephone (215) 357-4570.

Exotic high-speed train studies, consideration, research have my negative approval. The time and money ought not be diverted from where they can produce good here now and in a bright future through normal evolution. Pay consultants and researchers to lay out paper dreams with their unconceived mushrooming costly problems? Or roll up our sleeves and attack complex solvable present blocks to integrated transit improvement? The answer ought not be in doubt; we've been through the gamut of red-herring (Pacific Electric Red Cars-losing) dream-transit diversions in Los Angeles--and look at the probelms/cost escalations introduced by the non-evolutionary aspects of BART. So, Messrs. Tunney, Magnuson, Brinegar, Reagan, Ingram, Bradley, Biaggini, Nixon, Lewis et al.: Let's roll up our sleeves and improve on what we now have at relatively low cost; all that can be done has not been done. On earth Cloud Nine would be a fog; nobody would be flying, no birds except Boston-DC Owls, So.Calif.-No.Calif. Larks? I want and look forward to transit improvement, too, and it's all been delayed by these dreams that at great cost get us no place if not backwards. I enthusiastically support the Hartke-Weicker Bicentennial Railroad, a normal evolutionary improvement which will be a source of national pride, joy, guideline; let's be on with it, undiverted by proliferating Cloud Nine proposals without end. Since buses have their spokesmen and exotic train hardwaremen have theirs, expediting the improvement of low-cost rail transit I am Robert J. Swan, transit leadership - public transit catalyst, P. O. Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.

YOU CAN ADVERTISE IN RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER. Express Ads (80 typewriter characters & spaces per line) cost just 25¢ per line (minimum $1). DISPLAY ADS: $10 full page (5x8 inches); half page $5; quarter page $2.50; eighth page $1.25 (prices for camera-ready copy--final size, black ink; extra charge for reductions, enlargements, halftone preparation). Send remittance with orders under $10 to: Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 3 NO. 12
SECOND ISSUE OF
JUNE 1973
#62

ON THE COVER: Our favorite Amtrak artwork, from the cover of the SILVER METEOR route brochure (also available as an Amtrak poster). The original is in gold, pink, orange, green, red, blue and black and very striking. It is perhaps appropriate that our cover should carry some of Amtrak's pretty colors (tho in monochrome here), since if this issue has a theme it would be "what is behind the pretty colors?" (Please see the editorial on page 4, followed by a major article by Paul Rayton on the topic of current rail travel conditions.)

LETTERS

O.K., so the DOT people are ding-a-lings, in your view (see last issue). Surely your editor could have summoned up a better adjective.

RTN needs more professionalism. With professionalism comes respect. And only if it has respect will RTN have any clout. There was a letter to the editor to this effect a few issues back. Someone upstairs is missing the point.

A. David DeVries

Ann Arbor, Michigan

(Sorry you didn't like our term, but we thought it both appropriate and charitable. The Wall Street Journal reports--June 27--that "ding-a-ling" appears in the 8th edition of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, so perhaps it's becoming too passé anyhow. How about "dum-dum"?

As we've frequently said, RTN is a consumer's newsletter, not a professional publication. It's our role, as we see it, to deal as much as possible in new terms and new ideas, for the coming new age of better transportation. By the time new ideas filter up to the professional level they're frequently too codified to interest us for long--if indeed they do penetrate the membrane of impermeability that seems to surround the higher bureaucratic levels. --Ed.)

...my wife and I found Amtrak to be unspeakably vile as a public service, and railfans seem to prefer to "paint the lily." No one but a masochist or a railfan (if there's any difference) would actually endure the kind of service we experienced between Boston and New York and New York and Toronto more than once. The coaches are uncomfortable and in poor mechanical condition, so that an air-conditioning system that works is the exception; the schedules are pious hopes or cynical con-jobs rather than statements of practical achievement... Amtrak seems to have put its money into cosmetics, frills, the kind of thing that may earn a minute on a TV show, rather than into the hard basic essentials of a quality service. Thus, we have handsome schedule folders, a lounge at Penn Station, and red-jacketed "attendants." But we also have air conditioning that fails, escalators at Penn Station that don't work, hard-seated coaches and rough track that leave the passenger in search of a chiropractor, and employees in slow motion who take a half hour to complete the simplest job...

F. H. Matthews

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

I am calling a 6-month moratorium on Amtrak. Why? Because I am tired of paying expensive rail fares for undependable, uncomfortable and discourteous service. After thousands of miles of generally substandard service since the Amtrak takeover 2 years ago, I have decided to avoid Amtrak trains whenever possible. Since I must travel to New York regularly I am glad that the Reading operates an excellent service to Newark with PATH connections. I have always preferred these trains, anyway, and shall now use them exclusively. For excursions I shall rely on non-Amtrak carriers such as the Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore lines, the Reading, Penn Central commuter trains, the B&O and the Southern Railway.

On Thursday, June 7..., riding the NATIONAL LIMITED from Trenton to Columbus, Ohio I was particularly fortunate in finding a seat in a refurbished Santa Fe coach, as the train was completely filled. Indeed, the crew was afraid that they would not be able to accommodate all of the passengers who entrained at Pittsburgh, as one of the coaches was to be cut off there... The car that was removed, by the way, had been painted the same day at the Sunnywide yards and still had wet paint in the interior. It was sufficiently moist that it would not wipe off without some pressure; nevertheless it was not only a hazard to passengers' clothing but the paint let off a noticeable odor. By the time the car arrived in Pittsburgh it had such severe markings on the walls that it would require an entirely new paint job...

Christopher H. Anderson

Newtown, Pennsylvania

Your newsletter is much appreciated because it seems to be the only source for what to expect while traveling on trains. My most recent trip from Seattle to Pittsburgh bears out much of what has been already printed and need not be repeated. I must wonder what keeps patronage on the BROADWAY LIMITED so high with both the poor timekeeping and rough trackage. We Westerners don't understand how lucky we are. It is a waste of money to buy sleeping accommodations on this train.

Paul Kassen

Seattle, Washington

AMTRAK NEWS AT A GLANCE

Since our last issue a number of important developments have occurred:

*Senator Vance Hartke, pro-passenger train Democrat from Indiana and Chairman of the important Commerce subcommittee on surface transportation, is reportedly blocking funds for Amtrak's coming fiscal year, charging that Amtrak consistently does not ask for enough money and is attempting to cut off some routes. The Senate (June 21) reportedly "routinely" passed a $185 million authorization for Amtrak, well above the $93 million asked by the Administration, but the money is being held back by Hartke. There is speculation that one motive for this is the fact that Eugene Garfield, President of Auto-Train, now involved in a dispute with Amtrak over its planned Louisville-Florida route, is a friend of Hartke and was to have been his campaign manager had the Senator's bid for the Presidency last year advanced farther.

*Auto-Train announced that an agreement with SCL had been reached to initiate a new Louisville, KY to Sanford, FL run, and is moving forward with plans without seeking permission of Amtrak, tho one interpretation of the Amtrak law exempts Amtrak from any such competition except for pre-existing service. The National Ass'n of RR Passengers (June 26) appealed to Congress to clarify the law in a way that would abolish Amtrak's "virtual monopoly" on service. It criticized Amtrak for this action since the corporation has no plans for its own auto-carrying service and indeed is seeking to abandon its FLORIDIAN on the general route that Auto-Train would use. An Amtrak spokesman said the corporation felt obliged to pursue this course under the existing law.

*Amtrak has been auditing its transactions with the Penn Central, and has accused the railroad of overcharging the corporation, understating revenue, and grossly overstating on-time performance, reports the Wall Street Journal (June 25). At the same time, the PC is asking that Amtrak increase its payments to the railroad for running its trains by at least $32 million. Amtrak proposed a new cost-reimbursement system that is tied to quality of performance. It charged that the railroad overcharged Amtrak 13.1% and calculated incoming revenue 4.6% too low. Thus there was an average discrepancy of $9 million per month, costing Amtrak $1 million per year in interest. The railroad denied the monetary allegations, but admitted inaccuracies or bias in tallying on-time performance, and said a number of low-echelon employees had been dismissed because of it. Through last April, an on-time performance record of 70.6% had been reported, but Amtrak found this to be actually only 53.4%. Most of the discrepancy was close to the 5-minute late category, Amtrak's cutoff point. Amtrak's May data are "correct," it said, but earlier data supplied Congress and the public were wrong. Back to November 1971, said the WSJ, 3450 Metroliners were reported late (out of 13,302) while actually 6367 failed to arrive on time.

(continued on page 18)

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 12 (Whole No. 62), Second Issue of June, 1973. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. Subscription $6.00 per year; single copy 25¢. STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Kenneth Maylath, East Coast Correspondent; Peter Roehm, Northeastern Correspondent; Doug Ellis, Staff Photographer.
Scheduled mailing date for this issue: June 29, 1973.

EDITORIAL

Every so often it is, unfortunately, necessary to do the wash, and hang it out in public. We'd like nothing better than to sit and admire the pretty vestments that please us, but occasionally we must face up to the fact that they're dirty and are covering things that need attention.

So it is that now, with the new fiscal year almost upon us and Amtrak's appropriations bill still under negotiation, we must face up to the still-pressing problems that beleaguer the National Railroad Passenger Corporation. In the article starting on the next page, Paul Rayton argues strongly for the vital needs of America's rail travel system, and documents his claims with details from a 7000-mile survey of the nation's railroads, both Amtrak and non-Amtrak. The conclusions are the same as we've heard time and again: Amtrak needs more money, it needs to spend it more wisely in many instances, and it needs to get a much better grip on controlling its operations. More than two years have passed now--this is the end of Amtrak's experimental period. And still we seem to be just nibbling around the edge of our transportation problems. We need a major investment in new equipment and improved track so the nation will have a passenger railroad system that is a source of pride, that can be compared with the fine systems that other advanced nations have managed to provide for their citizens.

The letters from readers printed in this issue were not selected to fit the theme of this article. They are a representative sample of letters we have received since our previous issue went to press. They all agree on the same issues. As Amtrak's third summer begins, it is clear that the major problems of equipment, employees and operations--the same problems that plagued rail travel before the Amtrak takeover--have been only inching toward resolution. With the press of summer travel and the consequent need to use all available railroad cars, refurbished or not, the instances of equipment breakdowns seem to be increasing once more. The results are late trains, malfunctioning air conditioning, electrical failures, frustrated and irritable employees, and irate customers. It's also the time for sold-out trains, double-sold space, and incessant busy signals on the Amtrak telephone line. Amtrak, with its board of directors dominated by railroad men hostile to passenger trains, and the Administration that hoped the trains would just fade away, have teamed up to present us with problems somewhat from but about equally severe as those found before Amtrak Day.

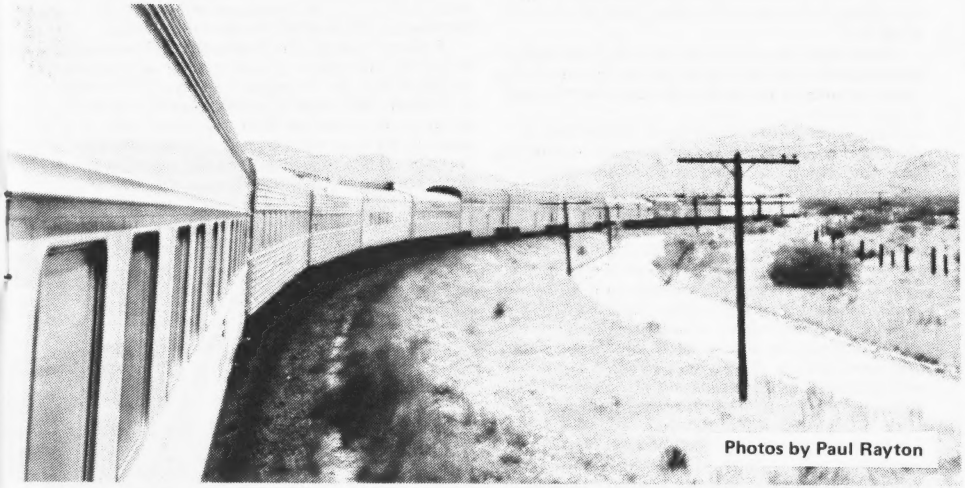
There are striking similarities between the operation of Amtrak and that of the Postal Service. Both were set up at about the same time to attempt to bring efficiency and better service to vitally needed functions of transportation and communication. When we walk into our post office now, we see a profusion of expensively-printed, colorful posters, mobiles and brochures giving us a big p.r. job about how we should start collecting stamps or use air mail instead of surface mail. But behind the counter are the same old personnel doing business in the same old, inefficient way. Exasperated, we stand in interminable lines and watch the mobiles flutter. Employee morale is, if anything, worse than before.

So with Amtrak. We are dazzled by the red, white and blue stripes on the cars and by the mod colors of the thin fabric over the seats. Then we get into a trip and realize that the machinery of the train is rotten to the core, many of the personnel as surly as ever. Anthony Haswell, Chairman of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, put it well in his testimony before a House subcommittee this month: "The refurbished cars, with their bright new stripes, new carpets and new upholstery look beautiful while sitting in stations on display for the edification of very important persons. However, once they are in motion--which after all is the whole idea of transportation--they become chambers of aggravation complete with air conditioning failures, heating failures, electrical failures, rough and noisy riding trucks, and an untold variety of squeaks and rattles." Amtrak made the "fatal error" of going for a flashy facelift without thoroughly rehabilitating its equipment from the wheels up.

Now is the time for Congress to give Amtrak enough money for new cars and better rehabilitation of existing ones. And to see to it that Amtrak uses its money in a way that benefits the rail traveler and not just the railroad manager.

RAIL RIDING IN AMTRAK YEAR 3

By Paul Rayton



Photos by Paul Rayton

Your Editor-at Large has recently returned from a 7000-mile tour of the Midwest and West on the nation's railways. I wish I could report that I found conditions better than those I described a year ago. Unfortunately, I cannot. The problems I encountered this year were slightly different than those of last year, but the sum total of my travel experiences on Amtrak was unpleasant--if not indicative of a national scandal.

This may be a bitter pill for those who believe that Amtrak is really making strides toward improving passenger trains. It is time, however, for optimists to look deeper than the bright colors on the exteriors of the rolling stock--time to look at some substantive underlying issues and Amtrak's approach to them.

The ardent reader of Amtrak press releases may be led to believe that he would have at least a 68% chance of arriving at his destination at the timetable-stated hour. The performance I encountered in some two weeks of travel was more like 10%, and even that is a generous estimate. In fact, I had a perfect record going--**not one** Amtrak on-time arrival--until the Santa Fe ruined that by bringing me back home into Los Angeles 10 minutes early.

I didn't even **see** any Amtrak trains on time. On the days I happened through Chicago's Union Station, virtually every train was arriving late, late, late. The BROADWAY LIMITED. The DENVER ZEPHYR. The SUPER CHIEF/EL CAPITAN. The TEXAS CHIEF. The PANAMA LIMITED. The ABE LINCON. And, in Ogden, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR went through well over 2 hours late. This abysmal performance, however, might be the **least** irritating element of my trip.

Let us start at the beginning, boarding--or attempting to--the SUNSET LIMITED for New Orleans. My problems started early for, arriving trainside at 8:55 pm (5 minutes prior to departure), I found that the door to my sleeping car had been closed and the Porter had disappeared, a trait for which he was to display an especial proclivity. I approached the Porter at the open door of the other sleeper and after a brief argument ("Why don't you get on at your own car?") he reluctanly agreed to let me board, but he wouldn't move my bags out of the vestibule. That was for my "disappearing" Porter to do.

I ventured back to "my" car, UP-yellow "Pacific Plateau." My mind reeled and I began questioning my sanity ("What am I **doing** here?") when I entered the sleeper. Yes, that bane of train travel was evident--the car was roasting hot, heat pouring from the baseboard heaters, and the air conditioning unit not even able to wheeze a breath of air. The hallway carpet was filthy. I would have walked off right then and there but Amtrak is intractable regarding cancelling sleeping car space: no refunds this late. Well, I could sleep in a coach seat.

We left 7 minutes late. Luck was with me, though, for we had an Electrician assigned to ride the train part way, and about an hour later he managed to get the air conditioner started, utilizing the time-honored paperclip-over-the-terminals-of-the-thermostat technique.

Later on I explored the lounge car and was gratified to see that Amtrak had stocked the car with several current magazines and the Los Angeles newspapers of the day. Maybe, I thought, partaking of an evening libation, this

(Photo above: The SUNSET LIMITED heads east across Texas.)

trip will turn out to be okay after all. At bed time, I couldn't get hot water in my room for love or money.

In the morning I presented myself in the dining car at 9:45 am for breakfast. "Sorry, we're closed until lunch. We'll make a call at noon." No verbal last calls made for breakfast. Passengers are supposed to mind-read their hours of service?

When noon finally rolled around, I was right hungry and ready for any supplication, even when I saw I would be stuck with the old "ScotTowel" menu.

My observations during lunch might best be described musically as "Something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue." The menu was **old**; the salad reached a **new** (for Amtrak) zenith with the two slices of genuine radish contained therein; and one **borrowed** ex-ATSF spoon was on the table among the Amtrak-issued, nondescript, tiny, airline-style implements. **Blue** (rimmed) was the chinaware, easily the most intriguing aspect of the whole ride. Amtrak's earlier attempt at china, the fragile, blue-rimmed product deployed on the BROADWAY last fall, was rather a flop. This new blue china was of much heavier construction and was marked underneath by the numerals 273, undoubtedly the date (Feb. 73) of manufacture.

Excited speculation over the china couldn't save a bad meal, though. I ordered the hot turkey sandwich, and even the gravy couldn't conceal the fact that it wasn't real turkey--it was turkey loaf, processed and pressed stuff with as much flavor as a paper napkin. Giant Amtrak had struck with the economy hatchet again. (Yet only a few days later on tiny, 1899-mile Rio Grande, I would be treated to the **real thing.**)

Arrival in mid-afternoon at El Paso was on time, pleasantly enough. On January 14 of this year the lunch counter/newsstand in the El Paso station closed for good, so another huge station now stands stripped of all the "life support systems" passengers need and appreciate. I couldn't even find a coin-operated newspaper vendor. The timetable allows for a 30-minute stop. Since one engine was to be cut out at this point, the stop took us 46 minutes!

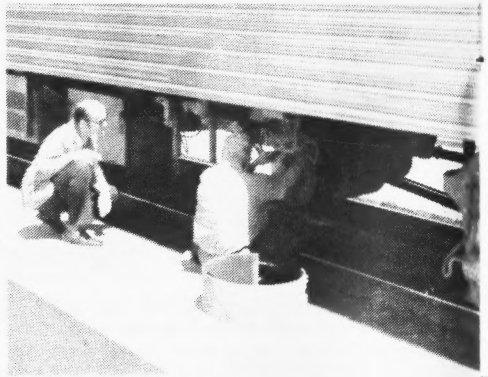
It was east of here that our timekeeping lost all resemblance to reality. To further dim my initial bright hopes, it developed that no more newspapers were to be placed aboard the train. The day-old news from yesterday's papers was deemed sufficient.

The comic show in the dining car reached a peak at dinnertime when I ordered a bottle of wine. Trains stocked from the Los Angeles commissary now carry a wine list and some wines. But they couldn't find a **corkscrew** to open the bottle, so in the middle of dinner I was obliged to dash back to my room to fetch my personal corkscrew.

By the time we reached Alpine, Texas, 219 miles east of El Paso, we were 57 minutes late and sinking fast.

I sat for a while in the forward lounge, a space in an ex-ATSF dorm/lounge mainly included for its crew lodging facilities. About midnight, a few minutes before the Sanderson, Texas stop, some Trainmen and a red-jacketed Amtrak employee, Bob Letton, were seated in this lounge area talking over the radio with the Sanderson operator. Trainman: "Hello Sanderson? Did you receive that message about watering the dining car?" Sanderson: "No, we didn't." That terminated the conversation. The import of that brief communication did not become apparent until the next morning.

Failure to water the dining car at Sanderson meant that there was no water at all for preparing breakfast. By the time the crew discovered it, though, there was no other chance to water the train until the San Antonio stop which, since we by then were almost 2 hours late, was about 8:00 am. Result: a lot of people had short tempers (and limited breakfasts) in the dining car.



What CAN the matter be?: A quick attempt at repairs to an electrical system while the SUNSET stops in Houston.

I then recalled the radio conversation of the previous night. So Sanderson hadn't received the message? Why didn't that Trainman relay it? Why does he bother to carry a radio? Why didn't Amtrakman Letton say something? Why did Mr. Letton **stay in the lounge** for the entire duration of the Sanderson stop? Why does Amtrak hire and **pay** men to sit around and watch their trains go to hell?

To add to the fun, overnight the air conditioning in the main lounge car had given its dying gasp and called it quits for the trip.

After two nights now, my invisible porter had still not provided me with clean towels, nor shined my shoes.

East of Houston the roadbed is not very well maintained. We staggered across Texas, running about 1:45 behind schedule. Frequent slow orders made the ride most exasperating because we couldn't meet the schedule, let alone make up any lateness.

Shortly after noon, the next air conditioning failure occurred, this time in the dorm/lounge. This proved to be too much for the crew members and they began openly criticizing the operation of the train. The equipment, for instance. Reminicent of a complaint I heard last year ("all our good SCL equipment went out West") these SP crews knew that all the good SP equipment (meaning the most recent SUNSET LIMITED equipment) was now on the Florida trains and they--with the long-haul train that most nearly meets its operating costs--were stuck with a bunch of reject equipment.

Besides which the maintenance was lousy, they told me. It lays over in the Los Angeles yards for 2 or 3 days between trips, but nothing seems to be serviced until the last minute and then it is just a rush, patch-up job. The dining car, for example, had been assigned "for one trip only"--three months ago. It had been all right (so far) this trip but on their previous run its power system had suffered a complete nervous breakdown, obliging them to rush everyone through the last dinner (heading toward Los Angeles) before it got too dark! Half the refrigeration units never had worked. The garbage disposal unit was inoperative--had been for some time--and a most unhealthy accumulation of garbage piled up in the kitchen area, but there was no way to get rid of it. To lend the final insult to this situation, Thomas Petts, out of Oakland, the new Western Regional Superintendent (or "Representative") of Amtrak's new "Health and Sanitation" Department, was riding the train from Los Angeles to Texas ("on a fact-finding trip to discover our needs and problems" was the way he personally described his mission)--but he never ventured into the dining car kitchen to investigate these certain health hazards. And the crew knew it.

Morale is important when a group of people are to work together in interdependent close proximity. Here Amtrak seems to have accomplished the impossible--demoralizing the crews of the SP! Every trip, they report, there is some major electrical and/or air conditioning trouble with the dining car or their dorm car, and the riding characteristics of the latter in some respects are less comfortable than boxcars.

The roof of the lounge car leaks when it rains.

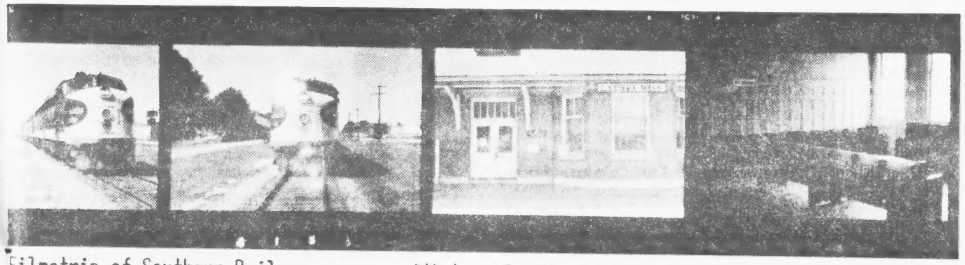
Through a combination of breakneck speeding and a not inconsiderable 30 minutes of padding in the schedule, we managed to arrive in New Orleans at 7:51 pm, 51 minutes late. I had just detrained when I looked up to see the SOUTHERN CRESCENT backing into the station right behind us. It was 7:55; they were a mere 5 minutes late--probably caused by **our** using and blocking their entrance into the complicated backing movements required to enter NOUPT.

My next leg took me on that selfsame SOUTHERN CRESCENT the next morning. The train was immaculate, outside and in. My sleeper window which had been dirty and foggy ever since LAUPT had been cleaned. Windows were **all** nicely clean. The SR Porter who took over for the overnight stay in the station evidenced much more conscientiousness and concern for my well-being. The general attitude of all train employees was a revelation. The Conductor was most pleasant; you almost wanted to introduce yourself and shake hands. The Brakeman was very helpful, too. I saw him demonstrating the workings and advantages of a sleeping car bedroom to a middle aged, coach-riding couple who had never used one. And the Steward of the dining car, a Mr. R. Jones, greeted me with such a cheery "Good morning!" that I momentarily was at a loss for words.

Southern Railway food service so far outclassed that of any Amtrak train (including in some respects the SUPER CHIEF) that I am embarrassed to take my friends on Amtrak train rides anymore. Meal prices run approximately equal to those of Amtrak but the service (linen napkins for **all** meals, **silver** silverware) is what sets this above the average. And here you can use Master Charge card to pay for the food, a convenience that Amtrak has done away with.

Every car was properly air conditioned. One cannot overlook the dome car on this run, as nice and quiet and smooth riding as you'll find anywhere. Nor can I fail to mention SR's amazing packet of brochures for travelers in sleeping cars. It has been distributed for several years but has recently grown to include a color postcard of their beautiful engines in the splendor of their named green, white, and gold livery.

We traveled strictly on schedule and I was truly sorry to leave the train when reaching my destination. The trip had been a revelation, especially when contrasted to the haphazard way the previous train had been run.



Filmstrip of Southern Railway scenes, with Laurel, Mississippi station exterior & interior.

My next train was the PANAMA LIMITED from New Orleans to Chicago. The trip was an excruciating one and the less I think about it the better I feel. A few points must be brought out, however, I wisely didn't expect the train to be on time, considering the timekeeping percentages it has recently been racking up. We were only 54 minutes late.

Departure from New Orleans was promtness with a vengeance, 4:00:00. I was sitting in the dome (an ex-NP slpr/dome). At 4:00:30 the Conductor arrived, looked at my (coach) ticket and promptly evicted me, decreeing the dome to be for the exclusive use of the (sole) sleeping car's passengers. Suitably humbled and not a little offended (there were no signs to forbid my presence there nor did the timetable proscribe

it), I started back to the coaches through the dining car. At 4:01:30, as I walked underneath it, the air conditioner in the diner quit (only 90 seconds out of the station) and released about 3 quarts of water out of the ceiling, narrowly missing yours truly. Fortunately this appeared to be an infrequent occurence and the unit still managed to keep the car cool. A mop was kept handy.

Generally speaking, most of the windows of this train were dirty. They had been half-heartedly washed, it is true, but the between-pane moisture and dirt had accumulated, and careless workers never bothered to do anything about it, even when changing broken glass. Why were the windows on SR so much cleaner, I wondered.

A family traveling together wished to turn some coach seats around so they could face each other. And that, it developed, is another thing no longer allowed. The decree has come down that seats are no longer to be turned. Thus one more thing that you can--correction, "could"--do on trains has hereby been terminated.

In an excellent demonstration of Amtrak's phenomenal organizational genius, the coaches (all of which had refurbished interiors) with the new wall-mounted individual ashtrays were clearly marked "no smoking" and the care **without** the ashtrays were--what else?--the **smoking** cars! They had even been so thorough here that the old ashtrays built into the frame of the seat were sealed shut.

As others have frequently said, the roadbed on this route is among the worst in the country. It definitely is not safe for the frequent 90 mph operation still used in some sections. Considering the frequent 10- and 15 mph slow orders, one wonders how speeds in excess of 60 mph are allowed on the rest of the track. The alternating 90 mph and 10 mph operation strained my credibility, not to mention my feeling of safety.

The train is operated at this high speed because the railroad is required, under the terms of their contract with Amtrak, to run the train no slower than was done on A-day, May 1, 1971. No standards per se, apply to the maintenance of the right-of-way (for which Amtrak isn't paying anyway) if any maintenance is done at all. Under the circumstances, one gets the feeling that Amtrak and/or ICG are playing fast and loose with the lives of the patrons of the PANAMA. I would feel safe in predicting another major derailment on this route.

The heat and air conditioning in my coach were having a contest to see which had the greater thermal capacity. The steam was not **turned** on, it was just that the control valve leaked so badly that it might as well have been left open. A painted note on the exterior of the car indicated that the steam heating equipment had been "reconditioned" less than a month before. Is this the quality of the workmanship in the refurbishing program?

Many of the power-assisted doors on this train did not work and/or did not close tightly. There was more than the usual amount of brakeshoe dust infiltrating the air of these cars.

In the dining car (the end 4 tables of which served as the lounge area) the man acting as lounge car attendant was not serving the Amtrak almonds with drinks. To jog his memory, I finally asked casually if they had run out and was rewarded with one pack. None of the other patrons was given any, though.

Other train crew members hadn't heard of the invention of flashlights. At some station stops they found it necessary to turn on the coach's glaring white celing lights in order to locate a detraining passenger. This throwback to the **worst** days of passenger trains is **most** disturbing for those trying to rest.

Patronage picked up nicely during the night, and by morning the train was carrying a good load, some 102 adults and 15 children out of Kankakee, plus those in the sleeper. Patronage had been extremely light (28 coach passengers in 4 coaches) out of New Orleans.

Arrival in Chicago was a blessed event for this wearied traveler. I had to continue on, however, and was to pick up the ABE LINCOLN for the short hop to Milwaukee. True to the Amtrak pattern forming for me, this train arrived in Chicago (from St. Louis) 28 minutes late. It was a long train (6 coaches, dining car, and parlor car "Port of Seattle") but it was another from which I was happy to exit.

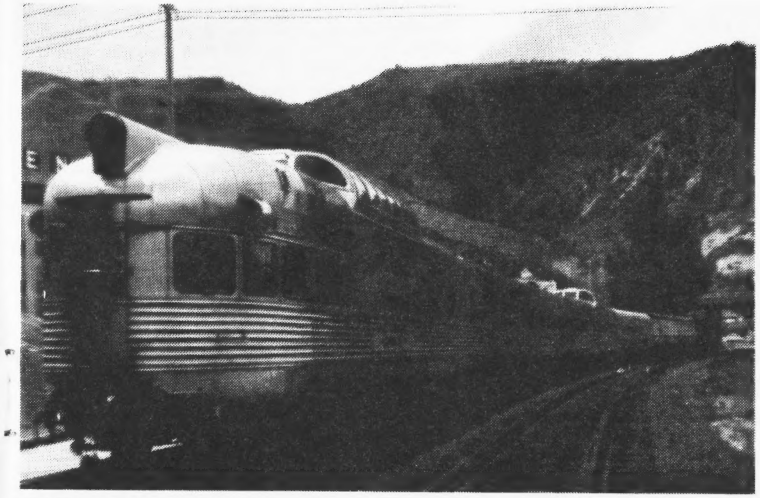
In the Chicago station it was a wonderfully chaotic scene as the train employees rushed passengers hither and yon, shoving and making people stumble over each other in their haste

of trying to shave a minute of time off the station stop. Few things have I seen **less** coordinated. Granted they were able to save a whole **two** minutes (from 10) but was it worth all the hassle and bad feelings generated? And it was all for naught anyway: we left 26 minutes late and arrived in Milwaukee 38 minutes behind.

To further the discomfort of the trip, there was only **one** car which was comfortably cool--the Parlor car. Unfortunately I was just a peon in a coach and had to make do in my undershirt in the steerage section. Just my imagination, you say? Impossible for a train to have 7 hot cars in a row? Maybe so, but the roses in the dining car had wilted from the heat.

My next hop was on the EMPIRE BUILDER from Milwaukee 17 minutes late. In addition to being late, there was no Great Dome. In its place was a venerable Lewis and Clark Traveller's Rest, not a bad car but not the dome, either.

After my previous miserable Amtrak experiences, in all honesty I must say that this ride **was** something of an improvement. All cars were at a comfortable temperature; there was a gratifying load of passengers (about 100, plus those



RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR, in its short weekday array of only two domes, pauses in the Colorado Rockies at Glenwood Springs. Note absence of former neon CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR sign on rear of observation car.

in the sleeping cars) aboard. The roadbed is nothing to brag about but it certainly beats that of the PANAMA LIMITED.

The dining car was an ex-NP unit and one that featured the potpourri of tableware from every conceivable railroad source. The setting was interesting and colorfull--to a railfan--but frankly it also looks quite junky. The setting on the poor cousin SUNSET LIMITED was better!

I had a memorable viewing experience when, just beyond Winona, Minnesota, we parallelled the Mississippi River and ahead of us the sun seemed to be setting into the river. During this time I clocked us at 75 mph, a good speed but not enough to get us into Minneapolis on time. The interminable twisting passage through St. Paul (40 minutes needed to travel about 12 miles) was no assistance.

A brief hiatus, and my train travels resumed at Denver, Colorado, where I would be boarding the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR for a trip to Salt Lake City and return. Being in the area of Denver Union Station the Sunday evening before my trip, I stopped in to watch the evening arrival of D&RGW train #18 from Salt Lake with the weekend crowd. A consist that included four dome cars and a full dining car arrived--18 minutes late--so I was both impressed (with the high quality and quantity of domed equipment in use) and depressed (was the Rio Grande really giving passenger trains a 3rd or 4th class priority and the concomitant late arrivals?). A heavy load of passengers detrained. I was curious to hear their comments expressed about what kind of a trip they'd had on this train passing through the most scenic of rail routes in America. I couldn't pick up enough to assess prevailing mood, so thus boarded #17 the next morning not knowing what to expect.

For a short (570-mile) route, and a relatively short railroad company, this train ranks right up there as among the best in the country. It was now Monday so the consist was smaller than that of the weekend but even so we still had an (ex-PROSPECTOR) baggage/coach combine, one dome coach, a full dining car, and the famous sleeper/dome/observation car on the end. The diner and the observation car had been redecorated, losing all outward traces of their CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR background in the process.

I sat down to my best breakfast in days as the train began its dramatic frontal assault on the eastern face of the Rocky Mountains. Menu prices here run about 15% higher than comparable fare in Amtrak dining cars, the quality of the product served is higher on the Rio Grande. An official of the D&RGW told me that their President had determined that there was no way that they could even hope to break even on their dining car service. Therefore, the decision was made to run the dining car at as high a level of service as possible. At least the Rio Grande would thereby get good public relations from their dining car service. If they were going to lose money, they might as well not get a black eye to boot. Accordingly, in instance after instance, I was pleasantly overwhelmed by the top notch quality.

My earlier-expressed fears of bad on-time performance were groundless. At the station stops from Denver westward we were usually on time and only once as late as 8 minutes. At Salt Lake City we arrived 3 minutes early. And this in on a single track line, heavily trafficked with hotshot freights, plus mountains, canyons, and heavy grades. Independent Rio Grande and Southern Railway had the only trains I had encountered yet to be run on time, and run **consistently** on time. I wouldn't make such a big deal of it except that **every** Amtrak train had the same rotten performance. And, most astoundingly, Amtrak actually **opposes** imposition of any kind of performance requirements on railroads (to include penalties for lateness) in the "Standards" case now before the ICC! It makes one wonder why. Who's in charge here?

To return to the Rio Grande trip: I spent a day of happiness passing through the magnificent early spring of the mountain country, drinking in the blue skies, reveling in the snows, the streams, the rocky canyons; in short it was almost another world.

Luncheon and dinner were sublime treats, a most welcome relief from Amtrak standardi-

zation. It was an adventure into all the excitement a superb meal in a fine dining car can be. The turkey, for instance, was sliced from a whole, 20-lb. bird, cooked on board by the chef. The baked apples for dessert were prepared from fresh apples. (On Amtrak they are supplied precooked and frozen.) On the Rio Grande, you are offered a choice of two vegetables, plus potatoes. (On the Southern, the dinner menu lists no less than three vegetables, plus potatoes.) A wicker basket with a generous supply of three types of crackers is always ready on the D&RGW's table.

Perhaps the most telling comparison in this whole area of food preparation exists in the salads. Amtrak salads are infamously dull. The Rio Grande salad was a true delight, contraining bits of lettuce, radish, celery, tomato, carrot, and topped off with spears of asparagus--an expensive delicacy even in Southern California. A wide choice of custom made dressings was available. This was real dining pleasure.

To add a finishing touch, four varieties of Paul Masson red wine, two whites, plus rosé, champagne, and cold duck are stocked. And they had a corkscrew, too.

Another interesting aspect of this ride was the overall attitude of the crew. The Steward in the dining car was genuinely interested in helping me select the type of wine I would want to order and went so far as to bring for my inspection a sample bottle of each wine in his locker. (The steward on the EMPIRE BUILDER had said, "We have red, white, or rosé." Period. No further elaboration could he bother with.)

The RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR lounge car attendant was also most helpful in agreeing to concoct a vodka collins to my specifications. The attitude of the men working seems to be that maybe, just maybe, if they work hard and they're lucky, the train might stay running past May 1, 1975.

That is conjectural. I intentionally planned my trip to be on a Monday and Tuesday to avoid the heavy weekend traffic. Toward the end of the trip I began experiencing the same melancholly I felt on the CANADIAN last summer, saddened by all the empty seats and wishing that the train were 10 or more cars long, with several hundred persons aboard sharing with me this last glimpse of everything a good passenger train can be. As it was, the patronage was medium to light, aabout 30 passengers out of Denver, and some 20-25 beyond the mid-point of Grand Junction. The Rio Grande reportedly figures its annual loss as $750,000 on this train--and that was prior to a recent wage boost.

After our on-time arrival at Salt Lake I rode the "limousine connection"--with 5 others--to Ogden. I only went to observe Amtrak at this location. True to form, the westbound SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR came through over 2 hours late. I didn't learn until I returned to Denver that the cause of this lateness was a fire on board the train just outside of Lincoln, Nebraska. I stayed up to watch the late train pass through, but couldn't spend the whole night in the Ogden station. Morning reports were that eastbound SFZ #6 had come in and gone out on time, but just my luck I didn't **see** that!

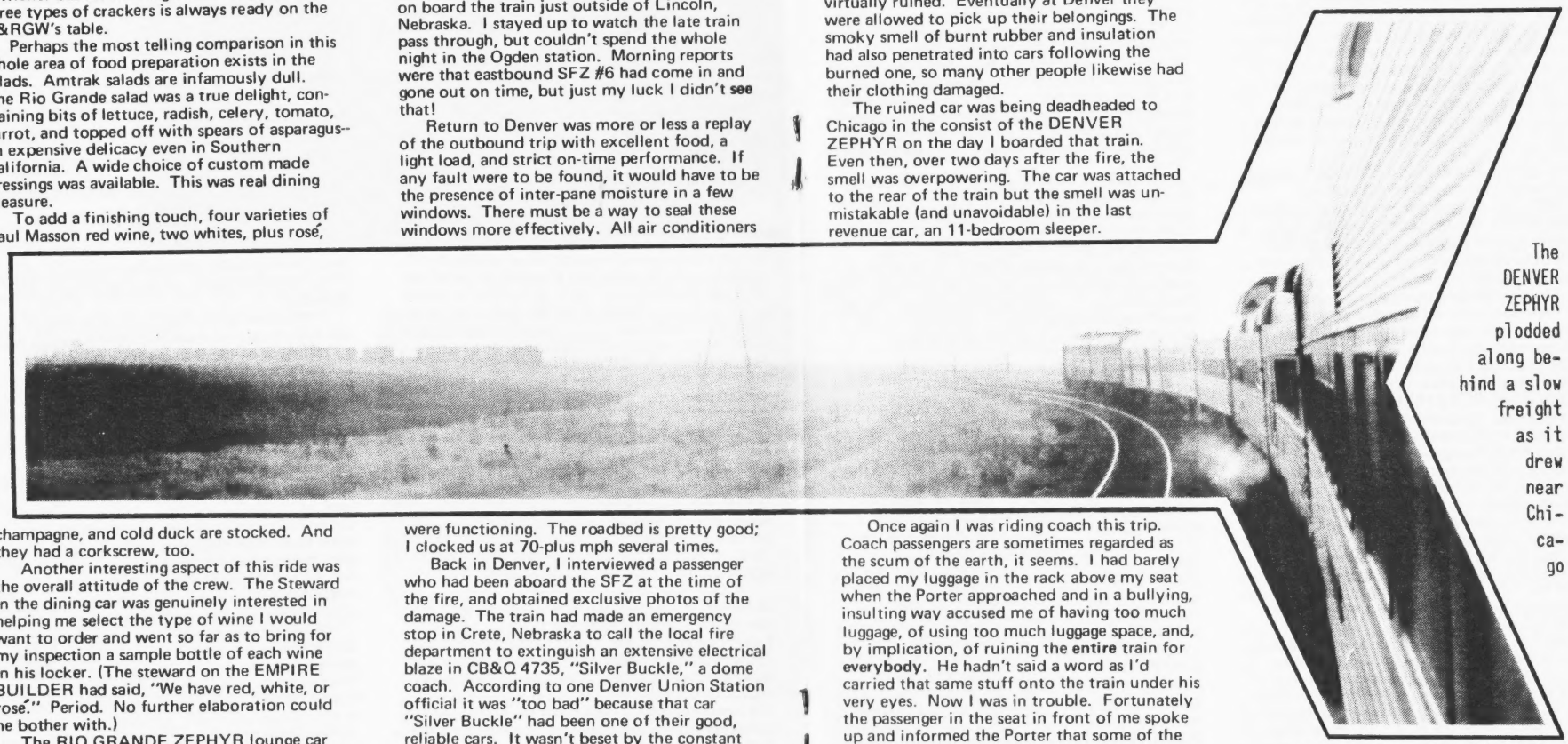
Return to Denver was more or less a replay of the outbound trip with excellent food, a light load, and strict on-time performance. If any fault were to be found, it would have to be the presence of inter-pane moisture in a few windows. There must be a way to seal these windows more effectively. All air conditioners were functioning. The roadbed is pretty good; I clocked us at 70-plus mph several times.

Back in Denver, I interviewed a passenger who had been aboard the SFZ at the time of the fire, and obtained exclusive photos of the damage. The train had made an emergency stop in Crete, Nebraska to call the local fire department to extinguish an extensive electrical blaze in CB&Q 4735, "Silver Buckle," a dome coach. According to one Denver Union Station official it was "too bad" because that car "Silver Buckle" had been one of their good, reliable cars. It wasn't beset by the constant malfunctions that plague many cars.

According to the eyewitness, the lights in the car had been flickering like mad all the way from Omaha to Lincoln, and there was the distinct odor of smoke. At Lincoln, allegedly, the car was even checked--or was **supposed** to have been. In the 20 miles between Lincoln and Crete the car began filling with smoke, faster and faster, coming in through the air ducts so nobody could tell exactly what was burning, or where. Amazingly, no Porter or other employee could be located by the passengers to report the problem! Passengers slowly (thank God there was no sudden panic) realized that something was definitely amiss with their car and moved to the adjoining cars. But sill nobody had enough sense (or train knowledge) to search the length of the train for a responsible party. Finally one girl did locate an employee, who called the Conductor and others to come take a look and, after much ado the stop at Crete was decided upon. By this time, however, the entire electrical system of the car had been fused into a hot lump of twisted metal. The Crete fire department put out the conflagration but then nobody seemed to know what should be done next so the train simply sat there in Crete for over an hour.

Passengers, meanwhile, were refused permission to re-enter the car to get their luggage, all of which thus became completely permeated by the acrid smoke and the clothing thereby virtually ruined. Eventually at Denver they were allowed to pick up their belongings. The smoky smell of burnt rubber and insulation had also penetrated into cars following the burned one, so many other people likewise had their clothing damaged.

The ruined car was being deadheaded to Chicago in the consist of the DENVER ZEPHYR on the day I boarded that train. Even then, over two days after the fire, the smell was overpowering. The car was attached to the rear of the train but the smell was unmistakable (and unavoidable) in the last revenue car, an 11-bedroom sleeper.



The DENVER ZEPHYR plodded along behind a slow freight as it drew near Chicago

Once again I was riding coach this trip. Coach passengers are sometimes regarded as the scum of the earth, it seems. I had barely placed my luggage in the rack above my seat when the Porter approached and in a bullying, insulting way accused me of having too much luggage, of using too much luggage space, and, by implication, of ruining the **entire** train for **everybody**. He hadn't said a word as I'd carried that same stuff onto the train under his very eyes. Now I was in trouble. Fortunately the passenger in the seat in front of me spoke up and informed the Porter that some of the stuff up there was **his**. The hushed but unrepentant Porter departed, having succeeded in getting my trip off to a bad start and leaving me to wonder what possessed him to be so inexcusably unpleasant to a total stranger.

Departure from Denver was on time and we went rolling eastbound across the plains at a clocked 83 mph.

The roadbed was passable during the early evening. It doesn't get to its worst until about the time people start to try to sleep--central Nebraska. I looked forward to dinner on the chance that I would find here a new menu. Nope. The so called "regional" menus seem to be more publicity than substance. This was the identical menu to that on the PANAMA, the ABE LINCOLN, the EMPIRE BUILDER, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, and also, I was to learn, was in use on the BROADWAY LIMITED and the EL CAPITAN. I had Amtrak green beans coming out my ears.

In the typical careless way now so frequently encountered all the dinner courses were served at one time. No sour cream was available for the baked potato. "We used to stock it," said the waiter, "but we cut it out." (They had sour cream on the EMPIRE BUILDER.)

Also notable was a new style of water goblet, rather squarish in design and with a 3" long, thin stem between base and cup. Talk about breakage! Who sold Amtrak that?

I sought to pay my bill with my Master Charge card and was advised that this was not possible--"this car doesn't have the forms or the machine." I paid by cash and found a mint returned with my change.

As late as 11:15 pm we were still on time, so I was not fazed by our 11-minute delay just west of Lincoln, and I retired for the night sure that my "curse" was broken; that we would be able to recoup those minutes.

When I next checked our progress it was 6:30 am. We were in Ottumwa, Iowa, and 40 minutes late. I had spent a rather restless night being tossed around by track so rough that it could give ICG a run for its money.

By Burlington, Iowa stop we were 49 minutes late and it was clear that I was fighting a losing battle. The final straw, so to speak, occurred just outside of Galesburg, Illinois, where we were placed behind a slow-moving

freight train and crept along at 8 mph for several miles. On a multi-track main line this was. The most maddening thing was that as we inched around curves we could look out the window and see the freight plodding along up front. We were only 100 yards behind it!

I asked various crew members what had happened overnight to make us so late. "Late? 50 minutes isn't late! What do you mean, 'late'?" They thought we were doing well. The Steward said that there were 26 slow orders in effect between Omaha and Ottumwa.

After that encounter with the freight train one would have thought our delays were over. But no, when we hit the area of commuter trains (after Aurora) we got put behind one of those and once again were poking along for some distance. Eventually we got to a place where we could switch to the opposite main and ran in from there to finally arrive "only" 27 minutes late.

During this second visit to Chicago I visited a friend who works on the BROADWAY LIMITED. He advised that the infamous blue chinaware that Amtrak bought last fall (put into service, then withdrawn because of the very high breakage rate) was once again in use on the BROADWAY. And breaking as fast as ever. On a recent trip the train had arrived in New York with only 40 dinner plates. Serving breakfast in a 64-seat dining car with only 40 plates made for an interesting scenario!

The next day I joined another mob scene at the south end of Union Station to attempt to board the SUPER CHIEF for my final lap to home. Four trains were loading Memorial Day crowds on adjacent tracks and this was the usual Amtrak organization-plus.

Considering the conditions on other trains--but mindful of Amtrak's promoting this as their "train of trains"--I renewed my acquaintance with the train I have previously described as "my lover" with trepidation.

About the first thing that strikes you, once you begin to move out of Chicago, is the smoothness of the ride. After so many miles of feeling like a pebble inside a maraca, I felt now like I was riding on a cloud.

I went to the lounge car for an evening drink. Shock #1 came when I was informed that no longer did the SUPER CHIEF stock the nice mixers they used to carry--specifically the individual 5½ oz. containers of Schweppes Bitter Lemon which made the nicest drinks in town. Now, was the word, every train must conform to the standardized list, "train of trains" or no.

Other little changes soon became evident. No more does the SUPER CHIEF receive newspapers or stock market reports en route. Not so long ago, current newspapers were placed aboard the westbound train in Kansas City, La Junta, Albuquerque, and San Bernardino. These distinctive services are no longer provided.

Food service here still outshines that of the other trains in the Amtrak system, primarily because the Santa Fe was reportedly **quite** insistent on maintaining a degree of control over the menu offerings. It is strictly subjective, but I get the feeling that the righteous determination of the Santa Fe is waning, they are tired, they feel it is a losing battle fighting for control of the menus because the train itself, the classic SUPER CHIEF, simply **is no more.**

"Amtrak's train of trains" was once noted even for its chinaware. That too has been sacrificed on Amtrak's despotic altar of economy. The once carefully outfitted dining car is slowly beginning to resemble all the others.

Just a few months ago, a traveler making the full-length trip would have the treat of complimentary hors d'oeuvre served in the lounge during the afternoon of the second day. These were made up by the dining car chef especially for lounge car service. Sorry, no more hors d'oeuvre on the SUPER CHIEF.

One dubious innovation has been the issuance of paper towels--rather than cloth--for the drying of dishes. Does this mean that it is cheaper to use several paper towels once and throw them away than to use a cloth towel (with about 15 times the absorbency of paper) which, once bought, only needs washing to be good as new? This isn't even ecologically sound reasoning.

Perhaps the most shocking thing of all was the revelation that, effective about two months ago, they stopped accepting Master Charge and BankAmericard for services on board the train. It was just sheer luck that I had sufficient money when I boarded to cover the cost of my meals. All during my trip I hadn't worried about funds because "....after all, I can always charge everything on the SUPER." At least I could one year ago, when I was returning from Transpo 72.

When I presented my card after dinner this year, the final truth came out. I should have suspected it, after that incident on the DENVER ZEPHYR, but was lulled into complacency--I recalled Amtrak making a big deal out of the fact that "you take our trains, we take your credit cards." Maybe, in stations. But no more on board the trains. Save for my having carried extra funds I would have been one starved person on final arrival in Los Angeles.

This warning should serve to alert all reader/travelers that Amtrak's ads bear little if any resemblance to factual reality. On this subject, see also the ad on page 2 of the current 4/29/73 timetable for another junket into Amtrak's land of fantasy. The ad pictures a man serving drinks to passengers in a SUPER CHIEF dome. In reality, drinks **will not** be served in this area; in fact the Attendant is instructed to "not encourage" people to drink in this area at all. Other ads imply that family-plan fares apply every day of the week. When did Amtrak become exempt from truthful advertising?

Uniforms worn by the crew members also have been the subject of much comment. It seems that the originally-proposed turtleneck sweaters for waiters were of nylon material and cheap manufacture; in addition to being exceedingly hot, the fabric gave many men skin irritations. Result: Amtrak has had to "eat" the sweaters. The accompanying coats were so poorly made that Army G.I. clothing, by comparison would have been custom-made haberdashery.

Morale, as mentioned earlier, is important and it is also a fragile intangible. The Santa Fe crews working on the SUPER CHIEF at one time--even as recently as a year ago--knew that they had a good, tight operation, probably the best in the country. So many little things have gone down in the several months just passed that here **esprit de corps** is rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

The complimentary cup of "wake up" coffee, delivered to your bedroom door is still available--but only if you know enough to ask for it. No form in my bedroom. No form presented with my dinner menu, or after dinner. I finally inquired about it and at least I got mine. Oversight? Perhaps. But poor morale doesn't help jobs get done with any degree of care.

It galls me most of all because when Amtrak was formed I had hopes of other dining cars striving to achieve the level of excellence demonstrated on the SUPER CHIEF. Sadly, the opposite has come to pass now. Me, I find that slogan "making the trains worth traveling again" has a very hollow ring.

It might be inferred that I hated my trip on the SUPER too. This is not the case, really. It was by far the best Amtrak train I rode, much of which for reasons beyond the control of Amtrak. This remains for example **still** the only long distance train to have its windows washed midway en route.

The SUPER's food service, despite its growing shortcomings, is still superior to that of any other Amtrak dining car. For instance, the ubiquitous Amtrak green beans were inescapable even here, but at least here they were accented with mushrooms. A waiter's recommendation to try the Tournedos of Beef, Bearnaise, was well taken. And the 2nd day luncheon in northern New Mexico continues to provide some of my favorite lunchtime scenery.

However I cannot allow these few remaining superlatives to cloud the vision that is otherwise so clear: this is **not** being run as well as even a year ago. Incessant economy moves are destroying the SUPER CHIEF.

From all of the above, I have attempted to resolve in my mind some kind of summary of just what exactly is happening out there on the railroads of America. It is not easy to make my observations jibe with the many optimistic reports which appear in RTN and other publications. However, it baffles me that others ride trains and don't see all around them the signs of a crumbling setup.

Some may conclude that Paul Rayton is some kind of a nut who really hates riding trains. Such is hardly the case. I would first and foremost warn all those critical of my observations not to allow themselves to be taken in by the increasing numbers of "refurbished" equipment appearing in the consist of their favorite trains. The plain fact is that Amtrak's right hand doesn't know what its left hand is doing. And how long can this continue?

The problem of personnel and staffing is not yet even approaching control, even after over two years of operation. Recurrent instances of surly and/or non-performing crew members were observed. Why did the Amtrak employee ignore the watering of the dining car on the SUNSET? Why did he not even leave the lounge car during the entire stop in Sanderson, when he plainly knew that the dining car needed water? Even if he was employed in some department other than the "Dining Car Watering Department" he should have cared enough about the success of Amtrak as a corporate entity to try to assist in a time of need. Sadly, he is just one example of a **major** problem. The on-board personnel on the SUPER CHIEF are getting rude and careless, too.

Why is Master Charge now only accepted on board **non-Amtrak** Southern Railway?

Why can't Amtrak, with what one must suppose is its mass purchasing power, at least meet the quality and variety of food service that an independent road like D&RGW sets out?

The "regional" menus may turn out to be just another cruel hoax. Virtually every train into and out of Chicago offers the same food--and they could hardly be said to serve identical "regions". The different West Coast menu (COAST STARLIGHT) serves canned peaches under the label of "fresh fruit." This does not elicit good customer reaction.

Why aren't timetables available on board trains? – (embarrassing as they may be).

Why were the independent railroads operating with timetable-precision--and Amtrak with an uncanny sloppiness?

Mechanical deficiencies are rife. There is no escaping that fact. The allegedly "refurbished" cars are receiving a facial when they need an operation. And yet en-route maintenance personnel have been cut back to minimal or nonexistent level, so trains with problems run less chance of having needed repairs made. Informed sources indicate that yard crews, too, have been cut back to absolute bare bones level. There are **lots** of supervisors, but nobody to **do** anything. To paraphrase the old song, trains are being sent out "on a rail and a prayer." Where were responsible personnel when "Silver Buckle" burned up? (initial rumors are that the car is a total loss--list price about $250,000.)

The people in Washington, too, the decision-makers, **simply do not know or understand** the subtleties, the special qualities that only trains can provide. Too remote from the trains, in the bureaucratic fog? In the name of "efficiency" (or something) they have eliminated the turning of coach seats into fours thus for a family to travel as a group in a coach. By this convenient fiat from Washington the trains lost another significant selling aspect that is not available on other mode of transportation. You cannot sit as a group on a bus, on a plane, or even a car. If you have children, that can be important to you! Such a contrast to my experience last summer on CN, when the Conductor came through the coach actually **suggesting** to passengers that they might like to turn the seats around for more togetherness--and then offering to do the job himself. Amtrak trains are not being run for **people**--they are being run for a bunch of distant "officials."

In further evidence, look at some of the unbelievable color schemes now being applied to the interiors of some cars. Obviously the designers who selected these colors have never ridden a train other than perhaps a subway or

commuter train on Long Island and they have overreacted. In addition they are avoiding the major issue of coping with some rather dated architectural structures. Bright coloration is **not** a valid approach to that handicap. It rather strikes me as akin to seeing my aged grandmother in hotpants. It doesn't resolve the basic antiquated design! The conflict is horrendous!

One sleeping car in particular that I encountered was a double disaster. In addition to the garish use of day-glo colors (enough to make one nauseous if required to look at it longer than 15 minutes) this car had carpe ting rising 5 feet up the hallway walls. Good idea, you say? Good noise control? Not so. Little improvement. But **worse** than that, the concept is faulty for the carpeting on the walls makes it impossible to pass through the hallway without a) receiving a nice rope burn if your bare arm should suddenly be pitched into moving contact with that carpeting--an occurrence virtually unavoidable--or, if you are wearing a suitcoat b) lint will be promptly deposited all over your clothing. At least Amtrak could have retained some people who had a comprehension of the realities of travel via train before foisting these abominations on the public.

And all the while time is wasting. Clocks all over the country tick away the moments measuring the amount of time left for Amtrak to define its success.

I submit that the bright colors are a failure in injecting true quality into train riding again. The public will buy it for a while, but there is a point when you can no longer deceive with bright exteriors. A paintbrush is no substitute for a conscientiously-run operation. I recently watched my films of a 1969 trip in the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR. We'll never even approach that kind of service again--and those were the **bad** days on CZ, the terminal illness had set in.

It isn't that one oversight is going to spell the end of the passenger trains, but it is these consistent problems and the sum total of the many **petty** aggravations and little inconveniences and unpleasantries that pile up on the newly-recruited train rider that ultimately leaves a bad impression, and next time the mode choice will not be that of a train. Those "little" things we train lovers are inclined to overlook may ultimately kill the trains because 90% of train travelers don't care one whit about **why** the air conditioning doesn't work, or **why** the dining car is out of water or **why** they're late. They only want dependable transportation.

The solutions are obvious: Amtrak needs to be far more aggressive in its dealings with the non-cooperative railroads. And it needs to be more frank, seek far more support from members of Congress than it has thus far been wont to request. If Amtrak has problems, Congress can pass laws to help them--but only if Amtrak will be honest to Congress! Furthermore, a reassessment of the priorities in what constitutes "good" train service is mandatory.

Congress for its part must recognize that inequities in transportation fundings **must cease immediately** or else this most efficient--not to mention most pleasant--method of transport will shortly be lost.

WELCOME ABOARD THE COAST DAYLIGHT -- Making the buses worth traveling again...

Amtrak logo on its side, Los Angeles destination sign in front, the bus at left almost daily hauls would-be train riders from Oakland so they can make connections out of L.A. Reason: Amtrak can't keep the coast trains on time, and the bus makes it faster. This June 24 an engine had given out, leading to the strange lashup seen above.

AMTRAK PIERCES THE CASCADES

Amtrak resumed passenger train service on the old Great Northern line across Washington State on Wednesday, June 13. The several hundred passengers on the first eastbound tri-weekly NORTH COAST HIAWATHA included delegations from Chambers of Commerce and Central Washington pioneers who had watched the GN line being built in the 1890's.

Forty representatives from the City of Wenatchee arrived in Seattle by charter bus to make the trip. They distributed five crates of Wenatchee apples to riders. Spokesman for the group was Bob Sumbardo, General Manager of the Wenatchee Chamber of Commerce, which had been active in the 2-year effort to have the train re-routed over the Cascade Tunnel route.

Sumbardo said: "A train is an integral part of society. Without buses, planes or trains, the city is alone. Maybe it is a status symbol to have a train, but as Senator Magnuson told us two weeks ago, now we have a train, and now we have to use it." David Watts, Amtrak's V-P for Planning, told the press that the route was restored because of significant increases in passenger business in the Pacific Northwest. "The national increase has been about 15%... but the Northwest is far above that." Two pioneer residents of Chelan County, Mrs. Maye Byrum, 82, and Jack Richardson, 84, joined the welcoming delegation on the train. Richardson, who had been born in the old Washington Territory, wore a black top hat and a "historical" costume for the trip. Mrs. Byrum told reporters she had watched the original GN rails put down near Wenatchee as a child. "I'm glad the train's back," she said.

Altho scheduled to meet the northbound COAST STARLIGHT from California due in Seattle at 5:20pm, the new "experimental" NORTH COAST HIAWATHA left a few minutes after its 6pm departure time without making the connection. The California train was 90 minutes late, and Amtrak did not hold the inaugural departure.

The first run eastbound from Seattle carried a 12-car consist. The train included: NP 404 baggage; GN 1323 dome coach; Santa Fe 2820 & 2880; Amtrak 5235; Amtrak 9811 (Silver Lounge--ex-CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR Cable Car dome); Amtrak 4450 & 4892; Santa Fe 2959; NP 455 diner; NP 378 dome lounge sleeper; and NP 364 10 & 6 sleeper. Succeeding runs have operated with 12 cars, but two more sleepers have replaced the two "extra" coaches operated on the inaugural trip. (Minneapolis observers found a somewhat different consist of the arriving first train, due to enroute changes: NP 220 & 404 baggage; GN 1076 coach--added at Minneapolis for Chicago--; GN 1323; Amtrak 4892; Santa Fe 2820 & 2880; Amtrak 5235; Amtrak 9811; Amtrak 4450; BN 1250 diner; NP 378 & 364; UP 1612 "Sun Villa" sleeper; Amtrak 2505 "Blue Mott" sleeper; and Amtrak 9330 "Silver Chateau" ex-DENVER ZEPHYR parlor car added at Minneapolis for Chicago.)

Amtrak has done no advertising for its new NCH route except for short news notices in the Seattle area. (In contrast, there are now singing commercials featuring the COAST STARLIGHT and large--6-column--newspaper ads featuring the STARLIGHT schedule, but strangely only as far south as San Francisco; San Jose, Los Angeles and San Diego are not mentioned.)

The Wenatchee World of June 14 devoted over half of page one to the arrival of the first train, including a color Amtrak logo under the masthead. City merchants and the Chamber of Commerce sponsored a sale commemorating restoration of trains, and festivities started at the ex-GN station at 9pm with country-Western and high school bands whipping the crowd, estimated at 2000 people, into a festive mood. Police shooed away little boys with their ears on the rails "listening" for the approaching train. Seattle and Spokane newspapers largely ignored the event, but the World had carried a series of Amtrak articles in the days prior to the 1st run. The Everett Herald inaccurately stated (June 12) that the train would go off the route at the end of summer, Sept. 9, while actually it will continue for at least one year.

--Glenn Lee

canadian news letter

"COME NORTH WHERE the World is Young," beckons a new color brochure from the White Pass and Yukon Route. The railroad runs 110 miles from Skagway, Alaska, across a piece of British Columbia, to Whitehorse in the Yukon. Interesting heavyweight cars and fantastic scenery can be expected. One brochure describes a number of tours, some including cruise ships, ferries, river boats and buses. Write the railroad at Vance Building, P.O. Box 2147, Seattle, Washington 98111...

MAYBE WE'RE OVERSTATING our case about Canadian railroads' interest in abandoning passenger service, but better that than watch it helplessly go down the drain. Reader John Szczepaniec of Buffalo, NY puts in a good word for Canadian trains: "I just returned from a round trip on CN to Montreal. Rode Tempo Train Burlington, Ontario (parked my car free at Burlington) to Toronto; 11:40am Rapido to Montreal; CAVALIER back to Toronto; and Railliner Toronto to Burlington. Nothing but good things to say, equipment in excellent condition, all trains on time, very pleasant personnel, well-patronized, etc. Turbo advertised in the Toronto papers for starting date of June 22. It carries a $2 extra fare. I saw one in the Montreal station June 10. Please be fair; CN runs a very efficient passenger system under very adverse conditions, a large country in area with a small population, certainly not ideal for a rail passenger system. Yet her trains are good, clean, on time, well-maintained, and very well patronized." He notes that even with higher prices the cost per train mile on Canadian Pacific cross-country is only 6.2¢ for a bedroom and 5¢ for a roomette, or less than the cost on Amtrak...

CANADIAN NATIONAL HAS distributed a color brochure giving Montreal Expos baseball schedules for the season and urging fans to take the train to the games in Montreal. The railroad offers to arrange your baseball tickets along with your rail fares...

"WHAT THE DEVIL was the point of developing a new one," asks an Ottawa man writing to the Toronto Globe & Mail this month "If no train can exceed 95 mph between Toronto and Montreal," referring to an earlier article on the resumed Turbo service. He continues, "On a recent visit to this country one of Gresley's Pacific locomotives made better time than that on the same track... Perhaps CN would do better to find a few of its old 6100 locomotives. The maintenance of these machines was troublesome, but not, apparently, as troublesome as the Turbo. Doesn't the Trans Europ Express routinely exceed 100 mph? Does it have trouble with its wheels? Whose idea was it to develop a train capable of competing with the best that the nineteenth century could produce? What it means is: Holy ***, Batman"...

VANCOUVER'S GRANVILLE STREET will be turned into a pedestrian mall in mid-1974 and closed to most vehicles, said Mayor Art Phillips late in June. Only transit vehicles will be permitted on the street, which will be narrowed from 6 to 4 lanes. "We want to encourage as much people activity, pedestrian activity, as we can and make downtown a really pleasant place," the Mayor was quoted as saying...

CANADIAN RAILROAD BUFFS and history devotees will be interested in the recently published (April 19) book, History of the Canadian National Railways, by G. R. Stevens. The 538-page volume is priced at $12.95 and is published by Macmillan, 866 Third Avenue, New York 10022. This well-illustrated history of "America's largest railway system" is another volume in the Railroads of America Series which now include the MoPac, Santa Fe, B&O, L&N, CP, NP, and IC. The Canadian and British publisher is Collier-Macmillan...

ALTHO CP RAIL'S "Princess Marguerite" ferry is on a shortened Puget Sound season this year, passenger loadings have been up. On Memorial Day weekend, passengers were turned away at Seattle Pier 64 as traffic managers observed the 2000-person limit imposed by the Coast Guard on the Seattle-Victoria run. On one heavy day, over 100 prospective riders were denied passage...

RAILWAY TO ALASKA may be closer than most people think. British Columbia's 1973 provincial road map shows that the British Columbia Railway is completing its northwest extension to Dease Lake, located 100 miles due east of Juneau, Alaska. The route runs thru roadless, virgin wilderness for most of its length, extending northwest from Prince George. The line is now within 100 miles of the Yukon border, and less than 200 miles from the existing narrow gauge White Pass & Yukon route running north from Skagway, Alaska...

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The automobile is the most popular and successful form of transportation ever invented, and it appeals greatly to our American sense of freedom by giving us the ability to come and go when and where we please. It has been the principal factor in our 20th Century economic and social lifestyles. Sadly, however, it has become too successful in our cities--to the degree where it is now defeating its purpose. As a result, we have arrived at a point where we must reduce dependence on private cars in urban areas--particularly during the rush hours--and convince commuters to either form carpools or use public mass transit facilities. And to make the latter feasible, we must provide our cities with the means to obtain fast, comfortable, and convenient mass transit systems."

--From first official address of Federal Highway Administrator Norbert T. Tiemann, Helena, Montana, June 18

"We must and shall continue to develop and improve the state highway system because the automobile is the dominant means of transportation for most of our cities, and it will remain the major mode of transportation in the years ahead, even while we are developing alternatives."

--California Governor Ronald Reagan addressing Los Angeles symposium on transportation, June 25

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Most of the 15 (Auto-Train) crew members on each 112-car train--except the engineers and conductors--are young women."

--New York Times, June 17

(That's .13 crew members per car. No wonder Auto-Train makes money.)

Urban-Suburban Transit

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION Claude S. Brinegar left June 6 for a 10-day European tour, during which he was to watch a demonstration of the French TGV 001 Turbotrain, automatically controlled subway cars, a rubber-wheeled subway car, and new Parisian subway lines. He also saw a demonstration of the British-French Supersonic Transport and the French "Airbus." In Germany the demonstrations included magnetic levitation vehicles, and a tour of the new Munich subway and auto-free zone...

PRESIDENT NIXON NOMINATED John W. Barnum this month to be Under Secretary of Transportation. The 44-year-old Barnum was named Acting Under Secretary early in June when Egil Krogh Jr. resigned...

WASHINGTON-TO-CUMBERLAND train that replaced the POTOMAC SPECIAL must receive two-thirds subsidies from Maryland and West Virginia after June 30 or Amtrak will drop it. But it appears that West Virginia is unlikely to cough up the money, while Maryland is studying the problem. The Angry Friends of the Railroad, a commuter group, persuaded Amtrak and the states to put on the present train, and are now fighting to make it permanent. Said an Amtrak spokesman, "There has been an amazing outpouring of support and interest"...

BART HAS JUST announced that October 20 is the earliest probable date that service to San Francisco can begin. It was earlier scheduled for September 24...

PHILADELPHIA'S LINDENWOLD LINE was out on strike June 18-22...

(continued from page 3)

*The Metroliner is eating away at air patronage in the New York-Washington route, according to a Federal Aviation Administration study released June 18. Last year rail traffic increased 18.6% in the corridor while airline ridership went up only 3%. Total ridership of the two modes combined was 3.1 million--854,000 by train and 2.2 million by air. There was no attempt to tally auto traffic, said to account for 80% of travel on the route, and bus operators keep no tallies for NY-DC.

*Amtrak is inaugurating a package express service July 1 over most of its routes. Packages are carried in baggage cars on regular trains, and on Turbos and Metroliners. There are 3 classes of service: Priority, Economy, and Custom. Rates are low, and most major stations can handle the service via the regular phone numbers.

*Amtrak's on-time performance in May was the worst yet--down to 59.3% on-time overall. April's figure was 65.2%. Partly this reflects the more accurate tallying of Penn Central runs. At the same time Amtrak's ridership was 23% greater in May than in May 1972--1.7 million versus 1.4 million passengers. An article in U.S. News & World Report (July 2) provides a good capsule summary of Amtrak's present record. The NATIONAL LTD was on time only once during all of April & May; the COAST STARLIGHT was on time once in April, twice in May, with average lateness almost 2 hrs in April, 79 minutes in May. The article points up Amtrak's timekeeping and equipment problems.

*Amtrak issued a new red-&-black East Coast timetable for June 10 and a 2nd edition of the April 29 national schedule, inserting June changes.

*The Illinois legislature is seriously considering subsidizing several new commuter-type trains between Chicago & other Illinois cities: Rockford & Dubuque (on ICG), to Clinton, Iowa (via C&NW), to Springfield (ICG), to Decatur (via N&W), and to Carbondale (ICG). The legislature will likely create a 6-county Chicago transportation district by year's end. Amtrak leased several C&NW "long-distance" bilevel coaches to run Chicago-West Quincy on BN. It is said that the ILLINOIS ZEPHYR will be renamed the MARK TWAIN ZEPHYR in the fall.

mixed train of thoughts

THE POSTAL SERVICE is making noises about raising the first class rate from 8 to 10 cents January 1. If this occurs, the subscription rate of RTN will have to be increased from $6 to $6.50 to cover the added cost..... AMTRAK'S NEW DIESELS, the 1st of them, went into service hauling the SUPER CHIEF, the first arriving at L.A. June 24. They are also to go onto the COAST STARLIGHT soon..... WANT TO BUY the Alaska Railroad, the government-owned line that has received no subsidy since 1939? A few companies are serious about doing so, and the DOT is studying the matter..... THE SUNSET LIMITED, eastbound, derailed at San Antonio June 10, with the 2 sleepers and lounge going off the track, delaying it an hour. Deferred track maintenance was blamed by some as the culprit..... CAN'T GET ROOM on Amtrak trains this summer? (U.S. News says most of the long-distance trains are sold out well into August). One Amtrak department has placed restrictions on employee summer travel because of space problems. But how come 5 or 6 people of that very same department travel to Florida and back about every weekend in sleepers? It must be on business, since at least one secretary is seen to accompany them..... SOUTHERN RAILWAY'S 4501 steam engine is giving the railroad lots of publicity with a July 4-8 tour from Chicago to Washington via Ft. Wayne, Fostoria, Pittsburgh, Cumberland, & Hagerstown. It's sponsored by the Roanoke Chapter of NRHS and runs during daylight hours. It's also running on ICG between Centralia and Chicago, the 1st steam operation on that road in over 12 years..... REMEMBER THAT FLATCAR load of wheels on the NATIONAL LTD noted here 2 issues ago? The sequel to the story is that they started rolling off the car going into Harrisburg, reports Robert W. Holmes..... SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR due in 2:55pm June 24 arrived 6:40am June 25 at Oakland due to a freight derailment on UP in Wyoming. It was quickly cleaned and turned, but got out about 2hrs late...

FIVE COUNTRIES / ELECTRIC / STEAM
DIESEL / MAINLINE
BRANCH / TRANSIT / COG RAILWAY

PTJ's September European Rail Tour has it all!
Spend two weeks extensively exploring the railroads of Switzerland, and a week in parts of France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Fly Swissair from North America to Geneva — rail to Paris — examine modern French passenger equipment and the fabulous Paris Metro — TEE train to Amsterdam — tour and ride remaining steam operations in Western Germany — then to Switzerland for 14 days of Alpine railroading, overnighting at locations such as Zermatt, St. Moritz, Openzil, Zurich, Luzem and Interlaken. Ride everything from TEE trains to trolleys, cog railways to cable cars. In fact, you can even run your own train on one of the days! Experienced guides will be along at all times. (And for those who don't enjoy a steady diet of railroading, the program contains options designed to please even the casual tourist.)

Send today for full information. The tour departs September 2, returns September 23. Space MUST be reserved early, so don't delay!

PTJ's EUROPEAN RAIL TOUR
29 E. Broad Street
Hopewell, N. J. 08525
(609) 466-2789
In NYC (212) 688-3131

PTJ PASSENGER TRAIN JOURNAL